

# Portraits of Pilate in Jewish Historical Works and Christian Canonical Writings

## Part one: Pilate According to Josephus Flavius and Philo

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### Abstract:

This study of Pontius Pilate, fifth prefect of Judea province, who remained in office from 26 AD until 36 AD, focuses on the presentation found in the writings of two major Jewish historians; Philo and Josephus Flavius. The analysis considers all references regarding Pilate that are found in their writings. The analysis, first focuses on the texts and the information provided in them, and then on a critical interpretation of the information placed in the socio-political context of first century Roman Empire, as well as the socio-religious context in which the writing were created by the authors. This approach helps us to uncover the authors' tendency in recording the events regarding Pilate.

### Introduction

After the death of the Herod the Great, his kingdom was divided between his remaining three sons, who rather unexpectedly inherited power and dignity. The most obvious candidate to succeed to the throne of Judea, Antipater II, the first born son of Herod the Great, had been beheaded at the order of his own father few days before the king died. According to the last will of Herod the Great, Archelaus was named as king of Judea (*JA* 17.188–189). Although the nomination was accepted by the army and the court (*JA* 17.194–195), it didn't immediately come into effect because the last testament of client-king had to be approved by Caesar (*JA* 17.195). For this, Archelaus and his family went to Rome to obtain Caesar's approval of his nomination (*JA* 17.219–220)<sup>1</sup>. A few days after the hearing, Caesar made the final decision

<sup>1</sup> Archelaus together with Salome, the sister of Herod, friends and relatives went to Rome with a strong conviction concerning his future. However, among his companions were those who intended to work against him (*JA* 17.220), since Archelaus was not the only candidate. An alternative candidate Antipas, the son of Herod, was supported by Salome and his mother Ptolemy, and an advocate, Irenaeus (*JA* 17.225–227), who came with Archelaus to Rome, but betrayed him in favor of Antipas, the better candidate for them (*JA* 17.227). This unexpected situation and the letters from Roman officials in Judea (*JA* 17.228) caused Caesar August to hold some doubts that in the end led to ordering a formal interrogation of both sides (*JA* 17.228–229). The interrogation ends without no immediate decision by Caesar,

concerning succession after Herod the Great. Archelaus was appointed the ethnarch of half the territory of Herod's kingdom, with promise of the title of king if he proved by attitude and action he was capable to act as a king should (*JA* 17.317). The ethnarchy of Archelaus contained Judea, Idumaea, Samaria and some cities: Caesarea, Sebaste, Joppa, Jerusalem, Gadar, and Hipus (*JA* 17.319–320). The other half of Herod's kingdom was divided between other two sons of Herod. Antipas received Peraea and Galilee, and Philip received Batanaea, Trachonitis, Auranitis and the domain of Zenodorus (*JA* 17.318–319).<sup>2</sup> Herod's sister, Salome received the cities of Jamneia, Azotus and Phasaelis according to will of Herod, she also she received from Caesar the royal palace in Ascalon (*JA* 17.320–321).<sup>3</sup>

Archelaus after returning to the Judea, rebuilt the royal palace in Jericho (*JA* 17.339–341), he removed from the high priesthood Joazar, and appointed Eleazar, the brother of Joazar, who after a very short time was replaced by Jesus, the son of See (*JA* 17.339; 17.341). Archelaus ruled as ethnarch for ten years, until he was exiled to Vienna in Gaul (today Vienna), because the Jews and Samaritans denounced him to Caesar for cruelty, tyranny toward the nation and disobeying Caesar's instructions (*JA* 17.342–244). Because of these accusations, Archelaus was called to Rome for a hearing, and after he was found guilty, Caesar banished him from Judea and confiscated his property. The ethnarchy of Archelaus was subordinated to the province of Syria, where Quirinius was appointed as governor (*JA* 17.354).<sup>4</sup> After banishing Archelaus, the administration of the province of Judea was ceded to the Roman prefects and procurators, who with exception of the period 41–44 AD exerted control over the region till the beginning of the Jewish-Roman war.<sup>5</sup> Pontius Pilate was the prefect of the Judea region, who served Rome in this post from 26 AD until 36 AD one of the longest periods in this post in the history of the Judea province. For this reason, it is no surprise that the name of Pilate is not only mentioned in historical writings of famous Jewish historians (as is the case with the majority of Romans prefects and procurators), but also (at least in the case of Josephus Flavius) he is the subject of a quite extensive presentation of his deeds together with comment on the general characteristic of his reign and a judgment on his service. In this study we will analyze the historical evaluation found in the works of two of the most distinguish Jewish historians of the first century (Josephus and Philo) regarding the Pontius Pilate's service as the prefect of the Judea

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who however gave a sign of his intentions to Archelaus by raising him up when he had thrown himself at Caesar's feet (*JA* 17.248–249).

<sup>2</sup> Archelaus yearly tribute amounted to six hundred talents. Antipas yearly tribute amounted to two hundred talents. Philip yearly tribute amounted to hundred talents. In the New Testament times measurement called talent refers to precious metal (gold) and 1 talent was equivalent of 58, 9 kg of gold.

<sup>3</sup> All Salome's possession were on the territory ruled by Archelaus (*JA* 17.321).

<sup>4</sup> Probably it is the same Quirinius, whom Luke mentions in Lk 2, 2 however the census in Syria took place in 6–7 AD (*JA* 18.26), and not in time of Herod the Great as Luke suggests.

<sup>5</sup> The names of the Roman prefects and procurators: 1. Coponius (6/7–9 AD), 2. Marcus Ambibulus (9–12 AD), 3. Annius Rufus (12–15 AD), 4. Valerius Gratus (15–26 AD), 5. Pontius Pilate 26–36 AD), 6. Marcellus (36–37 AD), 7. Marullus (37–41 AD), 8. Cuspius Fadus (44–46 AD), 9. Tiberius Alexander (46–48 AD), 10. Ventidius Cumanus (48–52 AD), 11. Felix (52–60 AD), 12. Porcius Festus (60–62 AD), 13. Albinus (62–64 AD), 14. Gessius Florus (64–66 AD).

province.

## 1. Pontius Pilate according to Josephus Flavius

### 1.1. According to the Jewish Antiquities

The first time Josephus mentions the name of Pilate in *AJ* 18.35 is in the context of his succession as procurator of Judea after Valerius Gratus (15–26 AD), however no details are given.<sup>6</sup>

The first account concerning Pilate regards the problem of busts of the emperor introduced into Jerusalem (*AJ* 18.55). The Law does allow any image of man to be erected or introduced into the Temple of Jerusalem or the city itself. However, in the first year in his office, Pilate and his army for the winter moved from Caesarea into Jerusalem, bringing with them the *signa* (standards), which were used as a rallying point, and more practically, as a means of communication in military actions. Because of that it seems to be natural that the army moving for its winter quarters also took its standards. However to the standards were added busts, which are a sculpted or cast representation of the upper part of the human figure. Any image of man in the city of Jerusalem was prohibited by the Law and it was treated as serious offense to the Jewish religion.<sup>7</sup> Pilate was the first procurator, who made such a mistake (*AJ* 18.56).<sup>8</sup> Because he entered the city during the night, Jews became aware of the problem later and went to Caesarea to entreat him to remove the standards (*AJ* 18.57). However, for many days Pilatus refused to be conciliatory towards the Jews, arguing that it would be offense to the emperor. On the sixth day, during another day of Jewish supplication at the stadium, Pilatus ordered the soldiers to surround the Jews (*AJ* 18.58). Next, he threatened Jews declaring that all of them would be put to death if they did not put an end to their tumult. In response to this threat, the Jews answered that they would rather accept death than tolerate transgressing the Law (*AJ* 18.59). The determination of the Jews forced Pilatus to remove the standards from Jerusalem and bring them back to Caesarea.

The second account concerning Pilate refers to the problem of using the Temple treasure for building an aqueduct. Pilate undertook the construction of the aqueduct, which would

<sup>6</sup> Josephus used the title “procurator” of Judaea, however inscriptions found on the *Pilate Stone* uses the title “prefect” of Judea. Josephus was probably influenced by Tacitus’ references to Pilate. Generally, the term “prefect” was in use until 41 AD (the beginning of the four year reign of Herod Agrippa I as the king of Judea) and it refers to the first series of Roman rulers of Judea. The term “procurator” was used after Herod Agrippa I death (44 AD) and it refers to the second series of Roman rulers of Judea. Although the terms differ, the duties related to the terms are the same. Prefects and procurators were responsible for collecting the imperial taxes and keeping the region in order. For this purpose they possessed limited military prerogatives.

<sup>7</sup> Concerning the images as offensive to Jewish Law, see: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Books XVIII–XX, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge 1965, pp. 43–45.

<sup>8</sup> Josephus suggests this was consciously provocative behavior (*AJ* 18.56). Eusebius says that according to Philo, Pilate set up the standards in the Temple. Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 8.2.123.

bring water to Jerusalem from a spring located approximately 35 km from the city (*AJ* 18.60).<sup>9</sup> For that purpose, Pilate used the sacred treasure (*AJ* 18.60), which was to be used only for purchase of sacrificial animals.<sup>10</sup> Because of that, Pilate had to face strong opposition from the Jews, who called for him to relinquish his office (*AJ* 18.60–61).<sup>11</sup> In dealing with this crisis, Pilatus instead of using a diplomatic solution, he used military force (*AJ* 18.61–62). Pilate's soldiers, wearing civilian cloths and mixing with the Jewish crowd, and then on a prearranged signal started to remove the Jews by using force. Consequently, the uprising was overcome, but many Jewish lives were taken. Judging from Josephus narrative, the massacre does not reflect badly on the career of Pilate, allowing us to presume the governor of Syria also recognized the Jewish protest as an uprising.

The third account concerning Pilate refers to his judgment of the case of Jesus from Nazareth (*AJ* 18.63–64).<sup>12</sup> Josephus informs the reader that Jesus was accused by Jews of high standing in society. Based on this accusation, Pilate condemned Jesus to be crucified. The short and laconic account puts the responsibility for Jesus' crucifixion on side of Pilate.

The fourth account concerning Pilate refers to disturbances in Samaria. A nameless leader gathered armed Samaritans on Mount Gerizim in order to show them the vessels left by Moses (*AJ* 18. 85). The gathering of armed men was seen by Pilate as an uprising, which had to be suppressed by military power. Pilate went to Samaria, fought the "rebellious" group, putting many of them to death including their leaders (*AJ* 18.87). Because of that, the Samaritans appealed to Vitallius, the governor of Syria. According to them, the men gathered in the village of Tirathana near the Mount Gerizim, who were slaughtered by Pilate, were not rebels against the Rome but refugees seeking shelter from persecution by Pilate (*AJ* 18.88). Based on this accusation, Vitellius sent Pilate to Rome in order to give the emperor account concerning the incident (*AJ* 18.89). In fact, Pilate was removed from office after ten years of acting as the procurator of Judea. Pilate was replaced by Marcellus (36–37), a friend of Vitallius.<sup>13</sup> However,

<sup>9</sup> In *BJ* 2.175 Josephus gives as the length of the aqueduct, the longer distance of approximately 70 km.

<sup>10</sup> In *BJ* 2.175, Josephus called the sacred treasures *corbonas*, which means *sacrifice*.

<sup>11</sup> Josephus describes the incident as uprising (*AJ* 18.62).

<sup>12</sup> Josephus gives very affirmative account about Jesus. He called Jesus "a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man". He presents Jesus as teacher, who was accepted by many Jews and Greeks. He calls Jesus Messiah. He testifies that Jesus was crucified by Pilate but on the third day he appeared to his disciples restored to life. Josephus is also of the opinion that the prophets spoke of Jesus. Josephus calls those who believes in Jesus "the tribe of the Christian" and attests their presence at the time he was writing the Jewish History. Some scholars have questioned authenticity of so-called *Testimonium Flavianum*, especially statements concerning the Jesus the Messiah and Jesus' resurrection. For short history concerning the problem, see: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Books XVIII–XX, LOEB, pp. 48–50.

<sup>13</sup> The fact that Marcellus was appointed as procurator of Judea by the governor of Syria (Vitallius), who did not generally possess that rights and power (it was prerogative of Emperor), creates problem of credibility of the account. The case is exceptional, and it indicates one of two possibilities: Vitallius possessed extraordinary power and rights or Vitallius exceed his competences. Both possibilities seems to be robbed of their bases, and because of that it is possible to suppose that Marcellus was not the procurator but only the official acting in the name of the governor of Syria. The use of the term ἐπιμελητής - *overseer* supports this interpretation.

before Pilate reached Rome, Caesar Tiberius was dead.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.2. According to the Jewish Wars

Josephus gives no account concerning the governors of Judea (Marcus Ambibulus - 9–12 AD; Annius Rufus - 12–15 AD; Valerius Gratus - 15–26 AD) after Coponius, but goes directly to an account concerning the fifth procurator of Judea (*BJ* 2.169–177), Pontius Pilate (26–36 AD). Pilate was appointed the procurator of Judea by Caesar Tiberius in 26 AD, and he stayed in office till 36 AD. Although Pilate normally resided in Caesarea, he ordered the placing in Jerusalem the Imperial Standards with image of Caesar, which was the act of transgression of Jewish Law (*BJ* 2.170–171).<sup>15</sup> When the Jews presented their objection to him in Caesarea, Pilate first refused to accept their demands, resulting in what we can describe as a passive revolt by the Jews, who for five days staged a sit-in around Pilate's house. This forced Pilate to consider the case again, but this time it took place in the stadium, where Pilate tried by a show of military power to force the Jews to accept the presence of the Imperial Standards in Jerusalem. However, the resoluteness of the Jews, who were ready rather to die than to accept the unacceptable, rendered Pilate's tactic ineffective. In the end, he was forced by circumstances to order the removal of the standards from Jerusalem (*BJ* 2.172–174).

Later, Pilate in order to finance the construction of an aqueduct, used the sacred treasure of the Temple, resulting in opposition from the Jews. Josephus clearly names the action of Pilate as provocation. In order to finance a construction of an aqueduct, of about 80 km, Pilate used the *corbonas* - sacred treasures, which could be used only to buy the animals needed for sacrifices.<sup>16</sup> This case became the occasion for Pilate's visit to Jerusalem, which caused strong and dangerous opposition of a large multitude of Jews. Pilate decided brutally suppress the uprising of Jews by sending the soldiers wearing civilian's cloths, who used cudgels instead of swords (*BJ* 2.175–177).

## 2. Pontius Pilate according to Philo

### 2.1. The Philo's account concerning Pilate.

Philo mentions Pilate in his work *On the Embassy to Gaius* (*Embassy* 38.299–305), where he gives an account of only one incident, which concerns the problem of the dedication some gilt

<sup>14</sup> The last account containing the name of Pilate, concerns the Caesar Tiberius (14–37 AD), who did not so often change the governors of the provinces. As the example is given Judea, which during the reign of Tiberius had only two procurators: Gaius and Pilate.

<sup>15</sup> The Jewish Law prohibits all kinds of human images in the Temple, and in the city of Jerusalem including Synagogues and houses.

<sup>16</sup> Josephus does not inform about the way Pilate took the money from the Temple, leaving us with an account of a seemingly very general nature. However the use of term *καλέω* - *to call for* suggests that Pilate pressured the Temple authorities to contribute to the construction rather than he by using force or subterfuge to remove the money from the Temple.

shields in the palace of Herod in Jerusalem (*Embassy* 38.299). According to Philo, when Pilate, the lieutenant of Emperor Tiberius was appointed governor of Judea, introduced into Jerusalem shields, which while they did not contain any forbidden ornamental elements (for example, the image of man), did contain inscriptions naming their donor (Pilate) and honoring Caesar (Tiberius). Philo emphasizes that Pilate did it not only to honor Tiberius but also to annoy the populace of Jerusalem. Pilate's action met with opposition from the Jews, who sent a delegation of four of the king's sons, some of the king's relatives, and the rulers of Jerusalem, in order to force Pilate change his course of action, which infringed on their national customs (*Embassy* 38.300).<sup>17</sup> When Pilate rejected their petition, the delegation argued with him pointing to the fact that it was his private initiative and not an order of Caesar, who would not condone any actions of his subordinate, which could possible lead to sedition in territory under his jurisdiction (*Embassy* 38.301). If the case was that Caesar had possibly given such an order, the delegation would like to be informed of it, and to appeal to Tiberius. The mention of a possible appeal to Caesar, deeply perturbed Pilate, who, according to Philo, could be accused of "*corruption, and his acts of insolence, and his rapine, and his habit of insulting people, and his cruelty, and his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never ending, and gratuitous, and most grievous inhumanity*". These accusations were more than enough to impeach him (*Embassy* 38.302). However, Pilate aware of Tiberius' policy toward the Jewish religion, did not change his mind and did not accede to the request of the delegation, because, according to Philo, he was man, who never "*venturing to take down what he had once set up, nor wishing to do anything which could be acceptable to his subjects*". So forcing the delegation to write a formal letter of appeal to Caesar (*Embassy* 38.303). The result of the appeal was an order from Caesar to remove the shields from Jerusalem and put them in the temple of Augustus in Caesarea (*Embassy* 38.304–305). Philo writes that Tiberius in the bitterest manner reproaches Pilate for his audacity and wickedness, but he did not removed him from his office.

## 2.2. The background of Philo's account.

Before any comments on the account concerning Pilate can be presented, some brief comments on Philo and his work. Philo's writing *On the Embassy to Gaius* has as its socio-historical background, an embassy of Jews living in Aleksandra to Caesar Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (Caligula). The embassy took place in 40 AD, and it concerned conflict between Jews and Greeks living in Alexandria, which occurred in 38 AD. The reason for the conflict was the decree of the governor Flaccus (*Flaccus* 8. 53–55), which robbed the Jews of

<sup>17</sup> Philo speaks about four sons of the king, posing the question as to who they are. Because he is speaking about "king's sons" it can only mean the sons of the king Herod the Great. However, who were they? Hoehner proposes Herod Antipas, Philip, Antipater I and Herod Philip. See: H. W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas. A Contemporary of Jesus Christ*, Grand Rapids 1980, p. 178. There is no problem respecting Herod Antipas, Philip the Tetrarch (Herod Philip II) and Herod Philip I, who were the sons of King Herod. However, Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod and son of Aristobulus I. Also, respecting the relationship between the brothers, according to the writings of Josephus, it was troubled so it is rather unusual that they stay together. Also Pilate and Antipas, who were not on friendly terms, and opposed each other in legal disputes, making this speculation difficult to accept.



their privileges. As a result of the conflict, the Jews were restricted to living in only one of the five districts that made up the city and previous privileges were not respected. Although, during the time of the new governor of Alexandria, the situation calmed down, tensions between two groups stayed on a dangerous level, forcing the governor Virasius Pollio, to send embassies from the two groups to Caesar.<sup>18</sup> The aim of the Jewish embassy, in which Philo played a leading part, was to restore privileges possessed by Jews before the conflict; however Caesar, who at that time declared himself god, ignored their claim and rejected the Jews petition.<sup>19</sup> However, after the death of Caligula, probably the second delegation from the Alexandrian Jews was sent to the new Caesar Claudius. The *On the Embassy to Gaius* is the work in which Philo attempts to persuade Claudius to change the policy toward the Jews in Alexandria (in particular) and all Jews in the Empire (in general) from the oppression they knew under Caligula to the favorable situation that prevailed in the times of Augustus and Tiberius. The account referring to Pilate is a part of Herod Agrippa's letter to Caesar Caligula concerning the controversial order of Caesar to erect his statue in the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>20</sup>

### 2.3. Interpretation of the Philo's account.

As this short historical background sketch shows *On the Embassy to Gaius* has a strictly pragmatic character and it is written in order to achieve a particular, very specific result. Although, the writing contains many historical facts it is not a strict historical account, which includes a coherent, holistic and objective record. The doubt concerning Philo's objectivity comes from the fact that he was actively involved in the event as the leader of the Jews embassy (according to Josephus). Taking into consideration that the embassy failed to achieve its aim, we should expect from the author a rather tendentious and one-side account instead of a strict historical record. This supposition concerning the objectivity of Philo is, in our opinion, attested by the way in which the author uses historical events known to us also from other sources.<sup>21</sup> In validating this statement, we will use the account concerning Pilate, which clearly indicates that Philo's account is not coherent, holistic and objective.

Philo refers only to the single incident concerning Pilate's installation of the shields in Herod's Palace in Jerusalem, which contained problematic inscriptions. Comparing Josephus' accounts concerning Pilate, Philo presents only one of four events referring to Pilate. In Josephus writings it is the first event concerning Pilate, which occurred at the beginning of his office as the prefect of Judea. In Philo writing, although it is the only recorded event, however it takes on a representative function for evaluating the rule of Pilate in general, and Pilate's

<sup>18</sup> The account concerning the embassy can be found in Philo's *On The Embassy to Gaius* (*Embassy* 28.181–183; 44.349–372) and in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* (*AJ* 18.257–260).

<sup>19</sup> The embassy to Gaius failed to achieve its aim, however Caligula died soon after the event, and the new Emperor, Claudius restored the privileges of the Jews in Alexandria in 41 AD.

<sup>20</sup> In fact the author of the letter presented in *On the Embassy to Gaius* is most probably the work of Philo himself rather than the original letter of Herod Agrippa, however the possibility may be entertained that the letter, concerning that matter, is similar in content to that actually written by Herod Agrippa.

<sup>21</sup> Argumentation for our opinion is presented in excursus at the end of this chapter.

personality in particular.

The incident of the installation of the shields is recorded also by Josephus, making it possible to undertake a comparative analysis of Philo's account. These two accounts differ drastically not only in their valuation of the event but also in facts concerning the event.

First, Philo writes about gilt shields covered with an inscription but not with images, whereas Josephus writes about the standards with medallions containing the image of Caesar. Josephus' account is logical and reasonable because Jewish Law forbids all images of man or animal to be installed in Jerusalem, giving legal ground for Jewish opposition. However, Jewish Law did not forbid inscriptions being placed in Jerusalem, robbing Philo's account of its legal grounds. Josephus' evaluation of the event is put down to Pilate's ignorance due to a lack of knowledge, on his side, concerning Jewish religious customs. In contrast, Philo evaluates the event as a conscious and deliberate act of provocation, rooted in the evil will of Pilate.

Second, Philo mentions the members of the embassy to Pilate, who stayed at Caesarea. Philo speaks about four sons of the king, other descendants and magistrates, but he doesn't mention the presence of a crowd in Caesarea. In contrast, Josephus speaks only about the people, without any specification. Philo's account probably tried to make a connection between the events at Caesarea and his own embassy to Gaius.

Third, Philo and Josephus give different accounts about the situation after Pilate's refusal to respond favorably to the Jews (Josephus) or the embassy (Philo). According to Philo, after Pilate's refusal, the Jews' embassy argued with him, beginning with accusing him of a provocative act, proceeding to pronounce on the legality of this action and ending with threat to appeal to Caesar. Pilate, although disturbed by the threat, did not change his decision, thus forcing the delegates to write a petition to Caesar Tiberius. As a result of the petition, Pilate was reproached in a bitter manner by Caesar, who ordered him to remove the gilt shields from Jerusalem. In contrast, according to Josephus, after Pilate's refusal, the people remained for five days encircling the house, forcing him to call a meeting at the stadium in Caesarea. During the meeting, Pilate tried to use the power of persuasion (soldiers threatening the Jews), however, the strong determination of the Jews, who were ready to die rather than to allow the Law to be transgressed, forced him to change his mind and remove the standards from Jerusalem. According to Philo's account, Pilate acts irrationally by putting himself at risk of Caesar's disfavor. According to Josephus, Pilate acts rationally, because he recognized the importance of the issue for the Jews and he did what is better for Rome.

#### 2.4. The aim of Philo's account concerning Pilate

The character of Philo's account concerning Pilate does not differ substantially from the way he writes of other lower ranking Roman officials (prefects and governors). Philo's general approach in describing Roman officials is one where instead of presenting simple records of historical events, he gives an interpretation of historical events as modified by him to create a theological-political rhetoric that will convince his reader, his audience. The main aim of Philo in the work under consideration is to convince Caesar Claudius to change the unfavorable policies concerning the Jews created by Caesar Caligula. Because of this aim, although *the Embassy* refers to historical events and persons, it does not fit comfortably in the model of a



strictly historical work. History is used by Philo to exhort, convince, in a manner which has much common with theological and political rhetoric rather than with an historical approach. The theological approach is indicated by Philo's axiomatic conviction that acting against the Jews is equivalent to acting against God, since God protects His people. Transgression of the Law is an offence against God as well as against a nation's tradition, and vice versa, every action against Jewish tradition is an action against God. This conviction roots a Jewish attitude, which does not allow the Jews to neglect religious matters in giving preference to political obligations. This critical point was not really recognized (or taken to consideration) by the Romans authorities, who according to Philo created all kind of disturbances and problems in relations between the authorities and their subjects. Religious matters are not subject to compromise for the Jews. On this theological argument, Philo builds his political approach, which concerns three major aspects: the loyalty of Jews; the conduct of Caesars; the conduct of lower ranking Roman's officials. In Philo's writings the statement that Jews are loyal subjects, is the basic axiomatic premise in describing quite complicated relationship between Jews living in many cities and places around the Roman Emperor and the Roman's authorities administrating them as well as other nations among which they are living. However this statement of Philo needs also to be seen against a background where according to common opinion, prejudicial as it may seem, that the Jews, due to their way of life, their beliefs, their understanding of themselves as a chosen people, are themselves the cause of many conflicts, between themselves and others, seen most clearly in their constant opposition towards the Romans. To answer this possible accusation, Philo first argue that all the disturbances in which the Jews are involved, refers exclusively to religious issues, which are matters of crucial importance to them. These offensive issues can take the shape of direct violations of Jewish religious traditions and customs (ex. Gaius' statue in the Jerusalem Temple) or indirect violation of Jewish Law by an action of non-Jews, which by Jews is recognized as offensive to their customs and the Law. In both cases Jews are not allowed to compromise in matter concerning God, whom they believe in, or the Law and the customs of the ancestors, which are the only way to preserve true faith in the only God. As far as the orders or action of the Roman's rulers do not contain offenses against Jewish religion and customs, Jews stay loyal to Rome and its officials.<sup>22</sup> In fact they have no intention of creating problems and disturbances for Rome or non-Jews, with whom they live together, but they are always consciously and deliberately provoked by non-Jews' offenses against the Law. This means, the Jews are not the source of the social disturbances, but they are only involved in the conflicts started by non-Jews. An offense against God and the Law cannot be left without an answer from Jewish side, which however, is always restricted to actions necessary for the protection of the Law and the tradition. Although the loyalty of the Jews toward Rome is unlimited, it is often challenged by unlawful action of Roman's officials, who purposely provoke Jews, by deeds, which cannot be forgiven by the God's people.<sup>23</sup> From

<sup>22</sup> See: *Embassy* 32.236; *Flaccus* 7.48.

<sup>23</sup> At this point, Philo introduces an element of conditionality in the Jews unlimited loyalty towards Rome. The Jews expect that their religious Law and tradition will be respected. Any betrayal of these expectations, very often confirmed by privileges, becoming sufficient for their uncompromised stand in defense of the Law, the tradition and their

Philo's point of view there are no obstacles to Jews being loyal to Rome and faithful to God, as long as their religious customs and the Law are respected by the Romans.<sup>24</sup> However, the main problem was that the Roman officials did not recognize how crucial for peace in Judea is, albeit conditional, the support of the Jewish people for the *status quo*.

The second aspect of Philo's political approach concerns the Emperors. As Caesar, the Emperor was more than just a political leader. He was the symbolic center of the Empire and all it stood for as it influenced the daily life of its subjects. More significantly as the court of final appeal, any official who neglected to administer justice could see his career and status ended with one word from the Emperor. Of the Emperors (Augustus, Tiberius and Caligula), during whose reign he was active, Philo fully realizing their unlimited power, gives very carefully elaborated accounts designed to cast them in the best light possible, and minimize the shadows in their legacy. Consequently Philo creates a very positive picture of Caesar Augustus, which is based on the favorable policy he adopted towards the Jewish religion (*Embassy* 23.155–158).<sup>25</sup> The apogee of Philo's admiration for Augustus is found in the statement "*who (Augustus) in all the virtues transcended Human nature, who on account of his imperial sovereignty as well as nobility of character was the first to bear the name of the Augustus*" (*Embassy* 21.143).<sup>26</sup> Consequently air-brushing Augustus self-declaration of divine dignity about which he writes, with a lack of external proofs, that Augustus was "*never elated or puffed up by the vast honours given to him is clearly shown by the fact that he never wished anyone to address him as a god but annoyed if anyone used the word, and also by his approval of the Jews, who he knew full well regarded all such things with horror*". A statement that fails to stand up to an examination of the historical facts concerning the cult of Augustus. However, Philo's aim is to present Caesar Augustus as having a positive appreciation of the Jews, and for this reason all facts, which would cast doubt on his presentation are heavily retouched.

Less elaborate, but heavily retouched is the account concern Caesar Tiberius (*Embassy* 24.159–161). Tiberius was author of the edict, which saw the expulsion of Jews from Rome from 19 AD till 32 AD, but Philo does not mention it. Instead, in a very general manner he put responsibility for the unfavorable treatment of the Jews on Sejanus, the right hand of Tiberius.<sup>27</sup> However, Philo praised Tiberius for his "toleration edict" toward Jews in the wider (*Embassy* 24.161). Arbitrary selectivity of the facts presented were justified by the aim of the Philo's letter and subordinated to his presumption that Tiberius was a good Caesar (even though others writers of the times give a different evaluation of Tiberius reign), simply because of the edict, which saw defenseless Jews treated favorably as the chosen nation.

The most elaborate account concerns Caesar Gaius (Caligula) due to two issues. The first

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privileges.

<sup>24</sup> H. K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, Cambridge 2004, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> Philo's account concerning Augustus is presented in *Embassy* 21.143–158.

<sup>26</sup> For others phrases expressing admiration see: *Embassy* 39.309 - "*the best of emperors*";

<sup>27</sup> In fact, Sejanus, who held real power in the period 26–31 AD, showed his disfavor towards Jews, but the edict was issued much earlier. Philo writes that Jews were counted by Sejanus as among his possible opponents and as loyal defenders of Caesar Tiberius, leading to their persecution (*Embassy* 24.169).

one refers to the delegation of Alexandrian Jews to Gaius (*Embassy* 25.162–196), in which Philo had a prominent role formally presenting the appeal. The second one refers Gaius' order to erect the statue of Zeus in the Jerusalem Temple (*Embassy* 31.207–373). The ending of the account (*Embassy* 46.373) best shows Philo's point of view on Gaius: "so now I have told in a summary way the cause of the enmity which Gaius had for the whole nation of the Jews". First, Philo gives an account of the unsuccessful delegation of Philo and other eminent Jews from Alexandria, which took place around 40 AD. In the conflict between the Jews and the Greeks in Alexandria, Gaius favored the Greeks, destroying every hope of the Jews for a change in their situation. The negative comments of Philo result not only by the fact that he failed but also from the way in which Gaius treated the delegation. While the first issue concerned Jews living in the Alexandrian Diaspora the order to erect the statue of Zeus in the Jerusalem Temple, was a direct blow at the very heart of Jewish identity as the chosen nation. Philo wrote an extensive account of this issue revealing the Jewish determination to protect the Temple from such a transgression.

Respecting the second issue Philo gives very negative evaluation of Gaius, based on the fact that he proclaimed himself "god" and forced everyone to accept this, here offering a theological reason rather than on his other crimes against Romans themselves, and offering a political reason.

In the context of Jewish opposition to Gaius' order, Philo gives only one positive evaluation of lower ranking Roman official, one Petronius, governor of Syria (*Embassy* 32.225–34.260; *Flaccus* 7.48), who was charged with actually erecting the statue, but convinced by the Jews arguments wrote a letter to Gaius requesting permission to respect the local customs of Judea's inhabitants. Others governors and prefects or procurators received negative evaluations, which are based on theological reasons rather than on political ones; their negative presentations by reason of offenses Jewish Law and customs.

Of those who served as Prefects of Judea, Pontius Pilate is portrayed negatively. His period of office as the fifth prefect of the region (26–36 AD) was relatively long at ten years, however Philo focuses on only one event, the introduction of the shields bearing inscriptions into Jerusalem. The account as presented in *On the Embassy to Gaius* (*Embassy* 38.299–305) comes as part of Herod Agrippa I's letter to Caesar Gaius, in which attempt to convince him to change the order concerning the erection of the statue.<sup>28</sup> The critical assessment is placed within a political context, with no indication of the religious aspect of the problem. At the time Philo was writing *On the Embassy*, Herod Agrippa I, to whom Philo was related by marriage (*Embassy* 36.278, 286) was King of Judea (41–44 AD). Herod's kingship being confirmed by Claudius for the support he gave to Claudius in his pursuit of the rank of Emperor/Caesar.<sup>29</sup> By presenting on the one hand Agrippa as the defender of Jewish customs and peace between Jews and Rome, and on the other hand the Prefects of Judea as those who by offending Jewish Law and customs provoked Jewish opposition leading to numerous disturbances that could possibly lead to war, Philo seems to imply that Jews should be ruled by a Jewish king and not by a Roman

<sup>28</sup> J. P. Lémonon, *Pilate et le gouvernement de l'Aj udée: textes et monuments*, Études bibliques, Paris 1981, p. 208.

<sup>29</sup> H. K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History*, pp. 35–36.

Prefect.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, along with Pilate, all the other Prefects are presented as the source of any disturbances that had occurred in Judea.

Philo's description of Pilate's character as spiteful, angry, lacking in courage, inflexible, stubborn, cruel, and his offenses while in office as prefect, venality, violence, thefts, assaults, abusive behavior, unjust judgment upon innocents and criminals, is Philo's stereotype description used in respect to all low ranking Roman officials, who were recognized by him as enemy of Jewish customs and the Law.<sup>31</sup> As a stereotype, its ahistorical nature should also be noted, it is not as specific as an initial reading might lead us to suspect. Rather the description serves a rhetorical function, advancing Philo's argument. The descriptions of Pilate and others prefects are not for the purpose of offering a historical record of their life and work rather they are offered as proof of his axiomatic political thesis (based on theological principles), which we can summarize as: the only good and just rulers are the Caesars (with exception to Gaius), while lower ranking Roman officials (with exception of Petronius) are the sources of every sort of disturbance among Jews across the whole Empire. This politically informed rhetoric was used by Philo in order to achieve a temporary goal, to convince Claudius, that he is the only one who can change the policy that reflects disfavor for the Jews as was evident in the time of Caesar Gaius. Although Philo's accounts in *the Embassy* and *In Flaccum* are historically significant, they are written for a rhetorical rather than for an historical purpose. In our opinion to judge Pilate based on Philo's account would be highly unwise.

### *Excursus*

We share opinion of those scholars who recognize the event recorded by Philo as a variation of the event concerning the standards recorded by Josephus. Following Hoehner (H. W. Hoehner, Herod Antipas. *A Contemporary of Jesus Christ*, Grand Rapids 1980, p. 175) however, the generally accepted consensus recognized these two events as different. So some comment is necessary to justify our opinion, beginning with a critique of Hoehner and those who follow him, then offer reasons for seeing Flavius Joseph and Philo's narratives as being variant records of the same event.

First, those who think that the incident recorded by Philo is different, point to Lk 13, 1 where Luke records "*It was just about this time that some people arrived and told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices*". This event is not mentioned in any others sources, so why is it that Philo also writes about an event, which Josephus omits. In our opinion, the event recorded in Lk 13, 1 can be linked to the event recorded by Josephus in *AJ* 18.60–62 (*BJ* 2.175–177), concerning the riot in Jerusalem in response to Pilate's use of *Corban* to build the aqueduct.<sup>32</sup> According to Luke, some people, possibly Galileans on the road home after Passover, brought to Jesus, who is, according to

<sup>30</sup> Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great and Mariamme I, the Hasmonaean.

<sup>31</sup> B. C. McGing, Pontius Pilate and the Sources, *CQB* 53: 1991, pp. 432–433.

<sup>32</sup> The aqueduct was built from Salomon's pool located near Bethlehem to Jerusalem, and its purpose was to supply the city inhabitants and pilgrimages with sufficient amount of water.

Luke, on his way to Jerusalem, (Lk 9: 52) news of Galileans killed by Pilate during the Passover. Josephus notes that Pilate, who normally resided in Caesarea, only came to Jerusalem in time of necessity or for the Jewish festivals, when the probability of revolt was usually higher than other times. On this occasion tens of thousands of Jews, that is to say a great multitude, had gathered for the festival. The multitude used this opportunity to aggressively express their indignation at Pilate, who used the Sacred Treasure, which was designated exclusively for the purchase of animals for sacrifices, to build an aqueduct (*AJ* 18.60–61). Josephus also suggests that Pilate expected problems during the Passover, and for this reason he ordered the soldiers to wear civilian clothes and carry cudgels instead of swords, should force be necessary to calm the situation. Although, he had no intention to use excessive force the situation developed until the stage, which ended with the slaughter of some Jews (*AJ* 18. 62). Immediately after this Josephus gives his account of Jesus (*AJ* 18.63–64) indicating that the incident in Jerusalem occurred during the time of Jesus' mission. The common features of Lk 13, 1 and *AJ* 18.60–62 (*BJ* 2.175–177) we may note are: subject - Pilate, place - Jerusalem, time - Passover, results - slaughter. Marshall, who opts for two different events, rejects the possibility that *AJ* 18. 60–62 and Lk 13, avers to the event with a short statement concerning the account in Josephus “*but this incident involved the murder of Judeans with cudgels outside the temple*”.<sup>33</sup> To this argument, two points of criticism can be offered. If the incident took place during Passover, the view accepted by majority of scholars, the multitude gathered in Jerusalem would have consisted of Jews from many places around the world including Galileans, and not just Judeans. Thus we cannot rule out the possibility, that Galileans on the way home after the Passover gave to Jesus the fresh news about the fate of some of their countrymen (Galileans - particular interpretation of the incident) who were killed during the festival. Concerning the text of Lk 13, 1, Marshall writes that expression “*about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices*” should be taken as “*metaphor for the two events taking place simultaneously*”.<sup>34</sup> The information that Pilate had mingled blood of Galileans with the blood of the sacrifices they offered, does not mean that Pilate's action literally took place in the Temple, but it means that during the Passover, when the animals were being sacrificed in the Temple, Pilate was massacring pilgrims outside the Temple, pilgrims whose actions were motivated by religious sentiment (*AJ* 18.60–62).<sup>35</sup> The meaning of the metaphor is that at the time when clean animals are sacrificed before God in the temple, the lives of religious and pious Jews were sacrificed for defending their religious tradition (sacred treasure - *Corban*).

Summing up, in our opinion there are reasons for seeing Lk 13, 1 as a very schematic and modified account referring to the incident recorded by Josephus in *BJ* 2.175–177 and after in *AJ* 18.60–62.

<sup>33</sup> I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC, Grand Rapids 1978, p. 553.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>35</sup> If the action of Pilate took place in the Temple during Passover it would be an exceptional case of transgression of the Holy place, which would be recorded in every possible historical work and not only laconically in Luke 13, 1. Rather, it is possible that Luke used sources referring to the same event recorded by Josephus in *JW* 2.175–177 (secondary in *AJ* 18.60–62) modifying them according to his narrative and theological agenda.

Second, if the account in Philo refers to a different incident from that recorded in Josephus (*BJ* 2.169–177 and *AJ* 18.55–59), then we have to explain why Philo has passed over the incident recorded in Josephus, for an incident otherwise unknown. Particularly when the incident recorded by Josephus is characteristic of Pilate, and fitted so well his rhetorical purpose. The argument that this problem is simply a matter of choice, does not stand up, since all of the accounts concerning Pilate recorded by Josephus have a very serious character and significant consequences, something that cannot be said about Philo's account. Josephus presents three serious incidents, which witness to Pilate's cruelty, and all of them can be shown as offensive under Jewish Law (*AJ* 18.55–59; 18.60–63) or are in breach of the instructions of the Emperor (*AJ* 18.85–89). In contrast the incident recorded by Philo, hardly offers sufficient reason for the opposition it provoked among the Jews; inscriptions per se were not prohibited by the Law.<sup>36</sup> True Brandon has suggested that the inscription on the shields could have possibly included some reference to the divinity of Caesar, but it is not attested to by text, which says "*which had no form nor any other forbidden things represented on them except some necessary inscription, which mentioned these two facts, the name of the person who had placed them there, and the person in whose honour they were so placed there*".<sup>37</sup> If the shields contained inscriptions with references to divinity of Caesar, Philo would not omitted this important, from rhetorical point of view, information. Although many other proposals can be presented, the basic question remains, why did Philo create his dramatic account of an incident that lacks other historical witness? An answer to this question would not be difficult if we accept that Philo's account concerning Pilate is a variation, in keeping with the political rhetoric used in the *On the Embassy to Gaius*, of Josephus' account concerning the incident with the standards (*BJ* 2.169–177; *AJ* 18.55–59).

Summing up, in our opinion the Philo's account about Pilate refers not to separate incident recorded only by him, but it is variant account of the incident recorded also by Josephus in *BJ* 2.169–177 and in *AJ* 18.55–59.

Third, there are questions respecting the dating of the incident in Philo's work. According to those who defend the incident recorded by Philo as different from that found in Josephus, this is only possible if it happened after the execution of Sejanus, after 31 AD. Since Sejanus is presented by Philo as the man responsible for designing structural oppression toward Jews (*Flaccus* 1.1; *Embassy* 24.159–161).<sup>38</sup> During the time when Sejanus was an influential voice in Rome (26–31 AD), any appeal from the Jews had little chance of being accepted. However after

<sup>36</sup> Philo informs us that "*the shields and gilded crowns and the slabs and inscriptions*" were installed in Alexandria's synagogues (*Embassy* 20.132–133).

<sup>37</sup> S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, Manchester 1967, p. 74. Tiberius never proclaimed himself god and even the Senate after Tiberus' death refused to vote him divine honor (See: Tacitus *Annals* 6.50; Suetinus, *Tiberius* 73–75; Suetonius, *Gaius* 12.2–3; Josephus *AJ* 18.225)

<sup>38</sup> Based on *Embassy* 24.161 where Philo writes about Sejanus order addressed to governors of the province to fallow his policy, there is often make supposition that Pilate's provocative actions was the fulfillment of Sejanus order, and consequently Pilate not only share the same mind with Sejanus but he was friend of his benefactor Sejanus. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Books XVIII–XX, LOEB, Cambridge 1965, p. 42.



Sejanus death when Tiberius restored a tolerant policy toward the Jews, the appeal of “the four sons of the king” could gain a hearing from Tiberius.<sup>39</sup> If the incident took place after 31 AD, it cannot be the same incident recorded by Josephus in *BJ* 2.169–177 and in *AJ* 18.55–59, because it occurred at the beginning of Pilate’s office as procurator of Judea. In our opinion there are significant reasons to question seeing the incidents as separate events. In the first instance, we need to note that as part of the background for the appeal, relations between Caesar Tiberius and the Praetorian Prefect Sejanus were troubled, to say the least. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, commonly known as Suetonius and, Publius (or Gaius) Cornelius Tacitus, commonly referred to as Tacitus wrote extensively about Tiberius, presenting a very negative portrait of him (eg. Suetonius, *Tiberius*). While a certain degree of skepticism should guide out reading of their accounts of Tiberius’ reign, they both witness to the received consensus. From the very beginning of his reign as Caesar, Tiberius refused to act in the way that Augustus had. He left critical decisions to the Senate rather than try to impose his own will. The overall political atmosphere in Rome and problems in his relationship with the Senate, saw him regard all possible potential successors with suspicion. His dislike of politics is further reflected in his neglect of the day to day responsibilities of office, including correspondence, judgments, petitions and all matters relating to the army matters. His relationship with the Senate instead became antagonistic, and rather than face the problem he increasingly delegated affairs to Sejanus. The affair concerning Germanicus caused more hidden antipathy among the senators toward Tiberius, who was even suspected about taking a part in Germanicus’ death.<sup>40</sup> After the incident, from 22 AD, Tiberius started to share his authority with his son Drusus, however he died in 23 AD in suspicious circumstances. Three years later, in 26 AD, Tiberius retired from Rome and until his death he stayed on the island Capri.<sup>41</sup> In

<sup>39</sup> H. W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, pp. 179–180. Often overlook information concerns the period and the reason for expelling Jews from Rome. Jews were expelled from Rome since 19 AD until 32 AD, what indicated that the author of the edict was not Sejanus but Tiberius, who however is presented by Philo as the tolerant toward Jewish religion. The reason for expelling Jews from Rome is the matter of discussion between scholars. Although Josephus (*AJ* 18.81–84) gives for the reason the particular and individual case (treachery of certain Jews against Roman women Fulvia), it seems to be not sufficient reason for expelling about four thousand Jews, what made scholars to think that the true reason concerns the proselytism of Jews (K. A. D. Smelik, *Tussen tolerantie en vervolging*, Lampas 22: 1989, p. 181; M. H. Williams, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Rome in A.D. 19*, *Latomus* 48: 1989, p. 765).

<sup>40</sup> Germanicus (15 BC–19AD) the member of Julio-Claudian dynasty and successful general, who by his achievements during the German campaign (14–16 AD), became the strongest candidate to the office of Caesar after Tiberius. However, on the one hand the action of Germanicus was not authorized by Tiberius and it violated the Roman status quo in the region of Rhine River, but on other hand it psychologically recovered the Romans after the disaster of the campaign in 9 AD. Germanicus got his triumph in Rome (17 AD), and soon after he was sent by Tiberius to Asia (probably in order to separate him from his army in Germany and to send out of Rome the potential supper), where after involving in conflict with the governor of Syria, Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, he died of mysterious illness in Antioch. Piso was suspected about poisoning Germanicus, and later because of his abusing the office of governor, he was put on trial before the Senate, during which he committed suicide. See: Tacitus, *The Annals* 4.21.

<sup>41</sup> Tiberius did not even went to Rome for his mother funeral.

Tiberius' absence, Sejanus who had risen to the rank of Consul, as Regent of the Roman Emperor, became increasingly influential, and became de facto the ruler in period 26–31 AD. He sought the Emperor's permission to marry Drusus' widow, Lavilla, and so be numbered among the Roman nobility and increase his chance to become emperor.<sup>42</sup> Tiberius initially refused permission, only later to grant it. At which point Sejanus started to plot against Tiberius seeking for the office of Caesar. Not surprisingly this also caused alarm in the Senate, so when Tiberius took prompt action and on a brief return to Rome put an end to Sejanus' aspirations by executing him, the prompt response was warmly received by the Senate. Tiberius' response to Sejanus' plotting sheds light on the true nature of the relationship between them. Sejanus was no more than useful tool in hand of Tiberius, who used him as far as it served his needs in relation with the Senate. However, even though he responded promptly to Sejanus' plot, also eliminating his co-conspirators, having secured his status as Emperor, Tiberius continued to neglect the duties of his office, he went back to Capri leaving political and administrative matters to the bureaucrats. The judgment of history says that he was man who wanted to be Caesar but he did not want to take on the burden of leadership. Given the witness of other sources, Philo's claim that Tiberius responded promptly to the appeal of the Jewish delegation is probably best described as wishful thinking than a genuine account of what happened, (*Embassy* 38.304–305).<sup>43</sup>

The second point concerns the relationship between Sejanus and Pilate. Since Philo and Josephus offer no comment on the topic, we have to proceed by deduction based on indirect information. Pilate was appointed Prefect of Judea in 26 AD, which is the year Tiberius left for Capri, the year when Sejanus began Regent, acting in name of Tiberius.

While this raises the possibility that Pilate was appointed by Sejanus acting as Regent, it does not change the fact that Pilate was ruling in the name of Caesar Tiberius, or our interpretation of the event as recorded in Philo.<sup>44</sup> Further in 31 AD Sejanus, who had plotted to succeed Tiberius was executed, and by 34 AD all his co-conspirators met a similar fate. Pilate was to remain in office till 36 AD, and the reason for his dismissal, by the Governor of Syria, Vitellius, are a totally separate matter (*AJ* 18. 85). Any possibility that Pilate may have been involved in Sejanus' conspiracy can be set aside since the known co-conspirators were all members of the ruling elite in Rome; none were officials in a distant part of the empire. Had Pilate been a co-conspirator, he would have been called to Rome following his dismissal. Tendentious elements in Philo force us to ask questions concerning Pilate's attitude toward the

<sup>42</sup> Tiberius refused permission for the marriage in 27 AD, but later allowed it in 30 AD.

<sup>43</sup> The proof that Tiberius, even after Sejanus' case did not change may support Josephus' account concerning Agrippa I and his servant Eutychus. Tiberius kept him waiting before giving him a hearing even though the matter concerned Tiberius' own safety (*AJ* 18.168–194).

<sup>44</sup> It is incorrect to conclude that due to the fact that Pilate was appointed by Tiberius he put the shields with inscription to honor the Caesar, because even if he would be appointed by Sejanus he had to write on the shields the name of Caesar and not the name of Sejanus. It is also incorrect that due to the fact that Pilate was appointed by Sejanus, he followed Sejanus' oppressive policy toward Jews, because Pilate had to follow the policy of Rome, which was communicated to him rather by governor of Syria than directly by the superiors from Rome.

Jews. Pilate is but one more Prefect or Procurator who mentioned schematically, in a formulaic manner; the portrayals are general and negative. For Pilate there are listed numerous serious offences, any of which could have resulted in his dismissal, particularly when compared with the issue of the shields, but none of them is named as the reason for dismissal. Further, if the appeal mentioned by Philo took place after Tiberius' 32 AD edict, Pilate's intentional provocation of the Jews, and blatant violation of Tiberius edict would have warranted consequences more serious than a mere imperial warning. And as we have noted above, since at the time of the incident with the shields Tiberius was no longer actively engaged in the day to day political life of the Empire, the rationale for the act offered by Philo becomes questionable.<sup>45</sup> It would be more logical to place the incident at the beginning of his time in office as a symbol of both his authority and loyalty rather than as an expression of antipathy or enmity towards the Jews. Thus leaving Philo's characterization of Pilate as too generalized and offering no significant insight into his character.<sup>46</sup>

A third point concerns relations between Pilate and Tiberius. Absence of sources limits what we can say. What information we have comes from Philo and the delegation to Tiberius appealing for the removal of the shields. Caesar Tiberius we are told wrote directly to Pilate ordering their removal and placing them in the Temple of Augustus. Such a way of resolving the situation can only be judged as extraordinary since customary way of proceeding with respect to complaints, appeals or juridical problems would be to bring the matter to the attention of the Governor of Syria, Pilate's immediate superior of all prefects and procurators in the region.<sup>47</sup> This way of proceeding was followed after Pilate's pacification of the incident at Mount Gerizim. (*AJ* 18.85–89). A Samaritan delegation appealed to Vitellius, Governor of Syria, who after investigating the matter sent Pilate to Rome to give the account of the matter directly to Caesar. However, before Pilate reach Rome, Tiberius died in 37 AD.

### 3. Pilate in Jewish literature

While two major Jewish historians offer accounts of Pilate and his role in Jewish history, there are marked differences in their presentations, indeed Flavius Josephus' account is not consistent in his interpretation. So we are forced to raise the question as to whether their accounts are substantially objective, or rather subjective, marked by both writers personal backgrounds and agenda. Reservations go beyond interpretation to their handling even of some of the facts. Since we have already raised some questions respecting Philo's presentation in the excursus we will omit that material here and focus on Josephus.

<sup>45</sup> Because we excluded possibility of Pilate's direct involvement in Sejanus' conspiracy, the argument that Pilate introduced the shields in order to show his loyalty to Tiberius (after his possible support for Sejanus) lost its power.

<sup>46</sup> The incident with the shields cannot be taken as the sufficient argument for accusation about Pilate ante-Jews attitude, presented by Philo.

<sup>47</sup> In time Pilate took office of prefect (26–36 AD) there were three governor of Syria: Lucius Aelius Lamia (22–32 AD); Lucius Pomponius Flaccus (32–35 AD); Lucius Vitellius (35–39 AD).

Our critique of Josephus will start with his portrayal of Pilate in the Jewish Wars. Written shortly after the Roman-Jewish War, he mentions two incidents involving Pilate (*BJ* 2.169–177). The first concerns the standards (*BJ* 2.169–171), the event that occurred a few days after his arriving to Judea. The incident strongly indicates some aspect of Pilate's character. He tried by using his authority to win over the protesting Jews, which shows that from the very beginning he acted in way typical of a soldier in service of Rome. However, it also shows a certain realism and diplomacy of Pilate, who in situation of strong Jewish determination, chose to withdraw rather than use force. Indirectly at least, Josephus presents Pilate as stubborn, ignorant but still a rational enough man capable of subjugating his pride and emotion in order to avoid an escalation of conflict.<sup>48</sup> The second incident, the use of *corban* to finance the building of the aqueduct that provided water also for the Temple (*BJ* 2.172–177), occurred some years into Pilate's term as Procurator indicating he had acquired some knowledge of the Jews and their customs. He knew that using the Temple treasure, even for a social/community project, would possibly provoke the anger of people, but opted to respond to the challenge to his authority aggressively. A certain degree of cunning is shown however in that the military presence in the crowd was covert, leading Josephus to present it as a manifestation of Pilate's cruelty.<sup>49</sup> Both cases recorded by Josephus present us with a Roman official ready to engage in provocative behavior, in the first case due to ignorance, but in the second the choice to be provocative were deliberate. In turn, Jewish opposition was founded on their faithfulness to the Law of Moses. The presentation of Pilate, accords with Josephus' general line of argument where Roman ignorance of Jewish culture, customs and religion were one of the major reasons that led Jews to war against Rome.

In the second major work of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Pilate is mentioned five times, two events (*AJ* 18.55–62) are identical with those presented in *the Jewish War* and the other three offer new information. One concerns his coming into the office (*AJ* 18.35) and two regards his involvement in two events that were crucial for him.

The first event regards his passing judgment upon one Jesus of Nazareth (*AJ* 2.63–64), and lead to his name appearing in Christian creedal statements.<sup>50</sup> The placing of the death of Jesus of Nazareth in the historical context of Pilate's time in office is significant for any argument on the historicity of the Christian gospel. Needless to say there is a significant difference in the interpretation placed on the event by the infant Christian community, and that offered by Josephus, who wrote his work in Rome at the end of the first century when the Christian community was establishing its own independent identity vis a vis the Jews. By placing responsibility for Jesus' death firmly on Pilate, Josephus probably desired to reduce tension

<sup>48</sup> Most probably Pilate acted diplomatically to protect his own career. Conflict with Jews at the beginning of his term of office would strongly influence rest of his service in Judea, as well as his political career in general. On the other hand, Josephus' account underlines the heroism of the Jews, who somehow overcame the pride of Roman official, rather than the rational behavior of Pilate.

<sup>49</sup> Again, Josephus used his pattern in presentation of the event, where right and just Jews opposing the unjust conduct of the prefect become the victim of his vicious behaviour.

<sup>50</sup> For Christians this testimony of Flavius is one of the proofs attesting historical credibility of Jesus of Nazareth.

between these two religion's groups, and remove responsibility from the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leadership. Consequently Christian readers of his work, could share his sentiments toward the Roman prefect.<sup>51</sup>

The second event concerns Pilate's military response to events, including rebellions, in Samaria (*AJ* 18. 85). His heavy-handed military response saw his dismissal from the office of Prefect when the Samaritans complaint was accepted as valid by the governor of Syria.<sup>52</sup> The fact that the governor of Syria recognized the accusation against the prefect, and took administrative action against him, also strongly indicates Pilate's responsibility.<sup>53</sup> Since Jews and Samaritans, in general, did not have a good relationship, Josephus mention of the incident fits in with his general approach in presenting Pilate rather than any sympathy toward the Samaritans. The incident serves perfectly Josephus' main line presentation, where Pilate's cruelty, senselessness and ignorance toward his subjects are the crucial concern in creating the picture of the fifth procurator of Judea. The picture of Pilate in *the Jewish Antiquities* is negative in the same way as in the *Jewish War*, however here it is expanded with a recording of two new events that are important since they show his unjust behavior extends beyond the narrow Jewish socio-religion context by referring to events that involve Christians and Samaritans.<sup>54</sup>

#### References:

- Josephus, *The Jewish War*, LOEB II, Cambridge 1967, pp. 323–573.  
 Josephus, *The Jewish Antiquities*, LOEB VIII, Cambridge 1963, pp. 3273–537.  
 Josephus, *The Jewish Antiquities*, LOEB IX, Cambridge 1965, pp. 3–211.  
 Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, LOEB X, Cambridge 1971, pp. 2–187.  
 Philo, *Flaccus*, LOEB IX, Cambridge 1967, pp. 302–403.  
 Suetinus, *Tiberius*, LOEB I, Cambridge 1998, pp. 310–417.  
 Suetinus, *Gaius*, LOEB I, Cambridge 1998, pp. 417–507.  
 Tacitus, *The Annals*, LOEB IV, Cambridge 1937, pp. 1–133.

<sup>51</sup> It is even more probable if we take into consideration persecution of Christians in Rome during the reign of Nero (64 AD), which naturally created a kind of antipathy towards the Roman administration.

<sup>52</sup> The governor of Syria did not have the power to dismiss Pilate from his office and for this reason he sent Pilate to Rome, where he would be dismissed from office directly by Caesar. In fact, before Pilate reached Rome, Caesar Tiberius died, but Joseph writes nothing about the later fate of Pilate.

<sup>53</sup> According to Josephus, the Samaritans' council when speaking against Pilate mentioned that the victims were "*refugees from the persecution of Pilate*", for which there is no proof in Josephus' works. It shows a generalizing approach of Josephus in recording events.

<sup>54</sup> The accounts of Philo and Flavius do not allow us to create a biography of Pilate, since the information regarding the fifth prefect of Judea are fragmentary, laconic, and are used for a particular purpose.